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Carlisle, John Griffin

Speaker Carlisle denies a
motion to repeal the...

Philadelphia

[1887]



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**SPEAKER CARLISLE DENIES A MOTION TO
REPEAL THE TOBACCO TAXES.**

As an important chapter in the history of tariff legislation we republish the following correspondence between Speaker Carlisle and a Committee of the Protectionist Democrats of the House of Representatives of the Forty-ninth Congress.

RANDALL DEMOCRATS TO MR. CARLISLE.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, U. S.,
WASHINGTON, D. C., February 5, 1887.

HON. JOHN G. CARLISLE, Speaker of the House of Representatives.

DEAR SIR: At the instance of many Democratic members of the House we appeal to you most earnestly to recognize, on Monday next, some Democrat who will move to suspend the rules, for the purpose of giving the House an opportunity of considering the question of the total repeal of the internal revenue taxes on tobacco. Many Republican members, we have reason to believe, are anxious to make such a motion. We believe the country is ready for the repeal of these taxes, and that a large majority of the House will so vote whenever an opportunity so offers. For a Republican to make the motion would give the Republican party all the credit accruing therefrom, and would almost certainly cause the loss to the Democracy of not less than two Southern States at the general elections in the year 1888.

This is an isolated proposition and we believe will command more votes than any other measure pending before the House looking toward a reduction of taxation, and favorable action on this proposition will not interfere with other efforts which are being made to reduce the burdens of the people.

Very Respectfully,

GEORGE D. WISE,
JOHN S. HENDERSON,
SAMUEL J. RANDALL.

SPEAKER CARLISLE'S REPLY.

SPEAKER'S ROOM, HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
WASHINGTON, D. C., February 7, 1887.

HON. GEO. D. WISE, HON. JOHN S. HENDERSON, HON. SAMUEL J. RANDALL.

GENTLEMEN: Your favor of the 5th instant, requesting me to recognize "some Democrat who will move to suspend the rules for the purpose of giving the House an opportunity of considering the question of the total repeal of the internal revenue taxes on tobacco," was duly received and has been carefully considered.

A week ago, in compliance with the request made by you and other gentlemen, I consulted fully with the Democratic members of the Committee on Ways and Means for the purpose of endeavoring to formulate some measure for the reduction of taxation which would meet the approval of our political friends and enable us to accomplish something practical in that direction during the present session of Congress. The bill which you then submitted for their consideration proposed legislation upon both branches of our revenue laws, and on the 3d instant it was returned to you with such modifications and changes as were necessary in order to make it acceptable to the gentlemen to whom it had been submitted.

In order, however, that our efforts to secure a reduction of taxation might not fail on account of our inability to agree upon a measure in advance, we at the same time submitted certain alternative propositions, some one or more of which we hoped might be acceptable to you. Among other things we proposed to submit the entire subject to a caucus of our political friends, with the understanding that all parties would abide by the results of its action, and in case that course was not satisfactory to you we informed you that we would at any time, upon a reasonable notice, support a motion to go into the Committee of the Whole on the State of the Union for the purpose of considering House bill No. 9,702, introduced by Mr. Randall at the last session. That bill relates to internal revenue as well as tariff taxes, and proposes to repeal the entire internal revenue tax on manufactured tobacco, snuff, and cigars. We have received no response to that communication, and I consider that it would not be proper, under the circumstances, for me to agree to a course of action which would present for the consideration of the House a simple proposition for the repeal of the internal revenue tax on tobacco, snuff, and cigars, to the exclusion of all other measures for the reduction of taxation.

Sincerely hoping that some plan may yet be devised which will enable the House to consider the whole subject of revenue reduction, I am

Very Truly Yours,

J. G. CARLISLE

RANDALL DEMOCRATS TO MR. CARLISLE.

WASHINGTON, February 8, 1887.

HON. JOHN G. CARLISLE, Speaker of the House of Representatives.

DEAR SIR: We regret exceedingly that you could not see your way clear to give recognition yesterday to some Democrat to enable him "to move to suspend the rules for the purpose of giving the House an opportunity of considering the question of the total repeal of the internal revenue taxes on tobacco." Your refusal to give this recognition, together with your letter of the 7th inst., deserves more than a passing notice. If two-thirds, or more, of the House are in favor of such repeal it was a grave responsibility for you to oppose such a large majority of the Representatives of the people. Assuming, however, for the sake of the argument, that the friends of the proposition constitute a less number than two-thirds, their strength is certainly such that they ought to have been permitted to test the sense of the House upon the question, especially since the country is watching with intense interest the action of the House in respect thereto, and the constituents of a large number of the members of the House have been urging them to obtain, if possible, a consideration of this subject. We do not wish to be misunderstood. We earnestly desire from a party standpoint that recognition should have been given to a Democrat to make the motion, but we would vote cheerfully for the proposition whether made by a Democrat or a Republican.

You assume in your letter to us that we ignored your communication of the 3d instant and had deliberately failed to make a response thereto. Our friends did not have an opportunity of considering that communication until Friday evening, the 4th instant. It was of such a character as to require more than a formal reply. We called at your hotel the next day, Saturday, but through no fault of yours or ours we did not succeed in obtaining an interview until the day after.

We believed that the friends of the repeal of the tobacco tax were so strong in the House that we would save to the oppressed tax-payers of this country an annual reduction of taxation to the extent of \$28,000,000 if the motion for repeal could be made in the House on Monday of this week, the latest day when such a motion, to be effective under the rules, would be in order during the Forty-ninth Congress. The motion, if made during the last six days of the session, would almost certainly be too late to secure favorable consideration for the question in the Senate. We did not anticipate refusal of recognition for the purpose intended. We understood

you to say to us verbally that if you gave to any one of our friends the desired recognition, fair play all around would require you to give other Democrats an opportunity to make a like motion to pass some distinct proposition having relation to a reduction of tariff duties. To this we assented. You instanced as one such proposition the putting of salt on the free list. We think that a revision of the tariff and of the internal revenue laws can be attained from time to time by reforming the obvious and greater grievances of the two systems, and that we should not refuse to make such reforms because sweeping changes had not been practicable. The country is expecting to obtain from this Congress relief from the grievous burdens of taxation. If some of us can not get all we want we should take what we can get. Our single proposition for the repeal of the tax on tobacco was not intended and can not fairly be construed as intending to exclude from the consideration of the House "all other measures for the reduction of taxation." We wished to obtain consideration for that proposition, but we were not pressing for the reduction of the internal revenue taxes to the exclusion of other measures for the revision and reduction of the tariff.

A Democratic caucus can not successfully deal with "the whole subject of revenue reduction" at this late stage of the session. That suggestion comes too late. If the caucus could have controlled the legislation of the Forty-ninth Congress from the beginning the country might have been much better off. If the House was considered competent to deal with the silver question, the pension question, and the oleomargarine question, free from the dictation of a Democratic caucus, we think it ought to be competent to deal with the question of a reduction of taxation. The caucus ought not now to be invoked to justify a policy of delay and non-action on this subject.

We sincerely hope, with you, "that some plan may yet be devised which will enable the House to consider the whole subject of revenue reduction" and revision "in a spirit of fairness to all interests," and in accordance with the letter and spirit of the platform of the national Democratic party adopted at the convention held at Chicago in the year 1884; and we assure you that we are ready to meet any of our Democratic associates who are prepared to treat with us on such basis.

JOHN S. HENDERSON,
GEORGE D. WISE,
SAMUEL J. RANDALL.

The Speaker did not reply to this letter.

**END OF
TITLE**